

to change their Nation in a way they see fit to change it, to protect the Social Security system, to assure that the Government governs properly but, most importantly, to look to the future and to honor the future.

Today we saw a Senate that looked backward. We saw a Senate that said that the past is better than the future. Are we going to be guardians of the past, or are we truly going to be the visionaries of the future? I suggest that the American people, in November, were talking of our future. They were most assuredly not talking of our past—for the past is \$4.8 trillion of debt.

This body—all of us, all Senators alike—has to take the responsibility for that debt. And today and for the last 5 weeks, we have struggled to give one moment of time in history to the American people. So they could choose how we would handle that debt. Yet, the central power and the central wisdom prevailed today. I suggest that it is not the wisdom of the American people, nor was it their wish.

So ORRIN HATCH, LARRY CRAIG and, hopefully, PAUL SIMON, before he retires, will have an opportunity to come to the floor of the Senate again, once the American people have recognized that President Clinton denied them that opportunity today, that he once again backtracked away from his pledge to the American people that he would progressively and in a positive sense bring down the deficit. This year, in his budget resolution, he walked away and denied what was once a promise and a pledge.

I suggest that the American people will not be denied, and they will have the opportunity to change the organic law like other Congresses in the past have seen the wisdom to allow them that choice.

I am amazed, Mr. President; I am absolutely amazed that even one Senator would not allow the citizens of his or her State the right to make a choice. But that was denied today—falsely denied, wrongly denied. I suggest that those citizens, in the long-term, will not be denied.

It has been a tremendous opportunity for me and for all of those colleagues who have joined with me in this issue and in this debate. And I would agree with the Senator from West Virginia, it has been a positive debate. It has been most constructive, and all ramifications of the issue have been thoroughly brought to this floor, some falsely, some under improper clothing or dress, some presented in ways that were illusory and not fact.

But the reality is that in the end this is an issue that will not go away and it will ultimately prevail.

Mr. President, I want to thank all of those who have joined with me, and most assuredly my staff, for their tremendous dedication as we brought this issue to the floor.

And I wish to thank the majority leader of the U.S. Senate, BOB DOLE, for offering the tremendous leadership

and taking the kinds of risks that must be taken as a leader to allow the American people their right to govern us.

Mr. LOTT addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Mississippi.

EXTENDING MORNING BUSINESS UNTIL 4:15 P.M.

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the period for morning business be extended until 4:15 p.m. today, under the same terms and conditions as previously ordered.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. DASCHLE addressed the Chair.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Democratic leader.

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, I yield 1 minute to the distinguished Senator from Delaware.

PARLIAMENTARY INQUIRY

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I have a parliamentary inquiry.

I am a supporter of this amendment. I voted for the amendment, and I will vote for it again if it comes up in a similar form that it came up now.

But I have a parliamentary inquiry. When the majority leader changed his vote from "yes" to "no" and did not make the motion to reconsider, is it within the province of the majority leader at any time at any place as long as the Senate is in session to move without debate to the motion to reconsider?

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Yes, it is.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, may I have another 60 seconds?

Mr. DASCHLE. I yield the Senator an additional 60 seconds.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I am for this amendment. There has been a little bit of blood that has been spilled on the floor here in the last couple of days, especially when the unanimous consent to vote at a certain time was obviated by our being pushed into a recess, a legitimate parliamentary move, but one that sort of violated the spirit of what everyone thought was going to happen.

I hope and I plead with the majority leader that when he moves to reconsider—and I will be with him; I will be for this under the following circumstance: as long as we all know it is going to be done and everyone is here. If the majority leader called for a motion to reconsider knowing that there were absences that would affect the outcome of this vote, I would, on a matter of procedure, change my vote to prevent that happening. I do not think that is the majority leader's intention, but I do not want to mislead anybody. I think this is so important that this has to be dealt with straight up, with all 100 Senators, unless they are ill, in the hospital and cannot make it, that every consideration should be given to every Senator to be able to vote.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator's time has expired.

BALANCED BUDGET CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Mr. DASCHLE. Mr. President, a number of people have spoken, and I know others are waiting to speak. I do not want to be long.

Let me just say what I have said on several occasions, that we owe the American people our best effort. Before this amendment was to go out to be voted upon by the American people, we owed it our best effort. The amendment that was pending prior to the last vote is not our best effort. Accordingly, the Senate has acted wisely in refusing to endorse this particular proposal to amend our Constitution.

Those who stood against it did so for good reasons. Supporters refused to guarantee that Social Security would be protected.

The prospects for this amendment were entirely in the hands of the majority. It was their choice.

Until 2 days ago, Senators were asked to bet on the chance that a new and different Senate 7 years from now would honor promises made by Members of this Senate.

Two days ago, for the first time, the majority conceded that they indeed intend to do exactly what we and seniors feared—use the Social Security trust funds to balance the budget. In a last-minute attempt to secure one more vote for this proposal, they offered to stop raiding the trust funds in 2012. The offer was later modified to 2010 and, finally, to 2008.

They missed the point. Those of us fighting to protect Social Security believe the retirement funds Americans have paid into the Social Security trust funds should be left untouched, period. Every American who has paid into the system has a right to expect those funds to stay there and be available to them when it is their turn to collect them.

For the majority to agree to stop using those funds to buy down the debt after virtually all those funds are gone reflects a cynicism that is solely disappointing. As the Senator from north Dakota has stated so well, balancing the budget by depleting the Social Security trust funds is not balancing the budget at all.

During this debate, 43 motions and amendments were offered, many of which would have substantially improved the proposals. Forty-two were rejected, essentially along partisan lines.

We offered language to guarantee the future of the Social Security System. Several Democratic Senators stated explicitly they would support the amendment if Social Security were protected.

We offered language to protect against unconstitutional Presidential impoundments; language to give States